Harold Weisberg

# Meachum: Calumnist, not a columnist

Before going on vacation Roy Meachum devoted three columns to the matter — ostensibly — of Kurt Waldheim, former head of the United Nations and now president of Austria. With all that space he never once got around to telling his readers what the charges are against Waldheim, what they are based upon or even who made them. Our own Department of Justice, as Meachum also found unworthy of mention, banned him from the United States. This was because of Waldheim's Nazi past.

Waldheim was, instead, the vehicle for more of Meachum's anti-Semitism and self-puffery. In pretended scholarship ("my study of the Nazi regime") he exculpates Waldheim, blames Hitler's excesses on others, which tends to exculpate Hitler, and he condemns the trials of Adolph Eichmann (whose name he never once got straight in his consummate scholarship) and Klaus Barbie. Meachum pontificates that these trials were wrong and failures. He castigates what he describes as "recurring TV specials" as "bad history" and uses this and more misrepresentations and outright fabrications as the basis for his persisting anti-Semitism.

As usual, Meachum alone is atop Mount Olympus thundering away at all the yokels, bumpkins and other assorted ignoramuses, including those who conducted the trials, those who produced the TV specials and those Jews who do not listen to Zeus' wisdom as we all kneel, or should in his view, at the base of Olympus.

Also as usual, with nobody to keep him straight, Meachum merely makes it up as he goes. Those TV specials, which he either didn't see or didn't understand, are "bad history" and "fail simply because they seek to show anti-semitism as the reason for the existence of the Nazi movement." Anti-Semitism is not and was never alleged to be "the reason for the existence of" Nazism and no TV special I saw even suggested this.

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Eichmann — and as Meachum never once states, he was second only to Hitler, Goering and Goebbels on the war-crimes lists — was an overzealous bureaucrat to Meachum and Barbie no more than a "minor functionary." (Not once does Meachum mention that Barbie's charged crimes were against Jews.) This enables Meachum to argue that, because Waldheim was only "another former first lieutenant in Hitler's service," he is innocent and the charges against him ought be ignored.

According to Meachum's self-proclaimed "study of the Nazi regime," the "slaughter of storm trooper leaders, in the Night of the Long Knives," was "because the brown shirts' harassment of Jews hindered the Nazi attempts to attain respectability."

The brown shirts were Hitler's own and the purge had nothing to do with anti-Semitism or with Hitler's alleged desire that Jews not be "harassed." Hitler's purge was part of a power struggle in which he eliminated the homosexual Ernst Roehm and Roehm's followers, including Nazi homosexuals.

Eichmann was not tried to "educate" people. He was tried and executed for specific crimes while he was in direct charge of Hitler's "final solution" — the holocaust.

How odd it is that with three columns of space Meachum never gets around to stating fact or properly identifying people and what they were charged with. Instead, he makes up what seems to support what he wants to say, regardless of fact and truth.

He makes up what he represents is the fact about Waldheim except that, without saying that Waldheim lied about his Nazi past and thus was able to become head of the UN, he repeats one of the lies Waldheim admitted was a lie: "At a time the Germany Army was desperate for manpower" Waldheim was a student and "his student status at war's end provided the cover for all his later lies." Meachum never says what these lies are.

If Meachum had not intended dishonest writing he could have, in much less space, reported what has been published and confirmed: that at the very time his unit was engaged in the most terrible atrocities Waldheim was with it, was informed because of his intelligence function, and lied about it to mislead the world into believing that he was not then in Yugoslavia but was in school.

I believe Meachum is wrong when he says that all the information relating to Waldheim was immediately available to the anti-Nazi forces, especially the USSR, and that if there had been anything to these charges the Soviets would have nailed Waldheim. The actuality is that the records were divided, depending on which army captured them, and that it was physically impossible for all the records to be studied and colated carefully. One result is that nothing at all happened to most Nazi war criminals. Efforts to plumb these captured Nazi records were keyed to the importance of the person whose records were searched for. Thus there never was any organized search for Waldheim records. That came decades later, when he was running for president in Austria.

Jewish organizations that have kept at this research despite inadequate funding and staffing then located Waldheim records in

The Frederick News-Post

FREDERICK, MD., FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1987 A-7

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Yugoslavia that had never been used. If they had been Waldheim would never have headed the UN.

Our own government had records disclosing enough of Waldheim's complicity in Nazi atrocities and his lying about this to ban him from the United States. It does not require the anti-Semitic fabrications of a Meachum to exculpate Waldheim. All Waldheim need do — and he refuses — is confront and refute the evidence, all of which is public, all of which he has.

Meachum devotes his third column to strong criticism of Jews in general because the nonexistent Jewish "leadership," that hoary fabrication of traditional anti-Semitism, dared criticize the pope for inviting Waldheim to the Vatican. If Meachum did not have the prejudices he is able to air whenever the venom stirs in him, he would have known and reported that, in extending this invitation, the pope was making a statement that others have a right to object to. Of all the leaders in the world, there was no need for him to invite Waldheim just when he was accused of complicity in Nazi crimes. Waldheim could have remained one of the majority of world leaders who were not invited to the Vatican.

Anyone who even pretends that at any time in Hitlers life it was necessary or even possible to make him more anti-Semitic is either a liar or an ignoramus or both. To be able to exterminate Europe's Jews, Hitler had to control the lands in which they were and to establish the camps for slaughtering them where they would not be seen by those who were able to move around inside Hitler's territory, such as diplomats and he correspondents of neutral countries. Hitler invaded the USSR the summer of 1941 and he had death camps in operation that December. The "Night of the Long Knives" purge was more than five years earlier, in 1934.

Moreover, if Meachum could make any claim to any real study he would have known that many incriminating Nazi records were destroyed by our army where its leadership believed that it was more important to destroy this incriminating Nazi evidence than to let it fall into the hands of the USSR. (I have personal knowledge of this from my World War II experience in OSS. U.S. Army records relating to this, along with countless captured Nazi and Italian fascist records, passed through my hands then.)

There is nothing in any study Meachum could have made that could establish that because the Yugoslav partisans captured the records of Waldheim's outfit the USSR had them automatically. It did not happen. The well-known and well-publicized truth is that the Yugoslavs themselves didn't even know what they had and that in this country, our government was not aware of all the captured Waldheim records it had at the National Archives.

It is irresponsible to write and publish untruths about significant matters of international interest and controversy and it is evil to misuse distorted and untruthful writing to propagandize. When he writes about Jewish and related matters, Meachum is a propagandist and calumnist, not a columnist.

*Harold Weisberg, of Frederick, has written frequently on this page about News-Post columnist Roy Meachum.*